



Utah Land Trusts  
Protection &  
Advocacy Office

# Trust Lands System Update

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## Message from the Director

Greetings, Trust Beneficiaries!

Hope this finds you and your institutional operations going well. In an effort to keep you informed on trust activities, the Protection & Advocacy Office is pleased to provide this bimonthly update on issues we hope will be of interest and useful to you.



The trust system created at statehood continues to provide financial support for key public institutions and is in good hands. From revenue producing opportunities on trust lands to returns from the trust's investment portfolio, dedicated trustees and professional employees strive to ensure that maximum benefits and intergenerational equity are being realized for each of you. Should you ever have any questions concerning the Trust and its relationship to your operations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

DIRECTOR  
Kim S. Christy

## PROTECTION & ADVOCACY OFFICE UPDATES

### Protection and the integral role of public and policy maker outreach:

The office remains committed to protecting the trust assets in combination with the integral role of public and policy maker outreach. A goal of the office and Trust system affiliates is to meet with every legislator to explain the trust system and help them understand the various roles involved in generating funds for the beneficiaries. Trust administrators invested significant time meeting with legislators during the General Session.

The meetings were arranged by the Advocacy Office, SITLA, SITFO, and the School Children's Trust with members from each, whenever possible. We believe it is important to cultivate relationships and educate policy makers on the relevance of the Trust System. One-on-one visits were conducted with 60 of the 104 legislators, with emphasis on explaining the history and administrative makeup of the trust, preserving its integrity, and addressing relevant legislation. Trust administrators intend to meet one-on-one with the remaining 54 legislators during the "interim" period, which is between now and the next General Session.

## PROTECTION & ADVOCACY OFFICE UPDATES - continued

- The Advocacy Office plays an important role in helping facilitate the process of Board of Trustee selection to both SITLA and SITFO Boards. This is a critical step in helping protect and advocate for the continued growth and sustainability of the Trusts. Both the SITFO and SITLA Board Nominating Committee's have met and will be selecting candidates to nominate to serve on the Board of Trustees to fill seats that are terming-out.
- A new "Communication Coordination Team" has been created to help with communications and outreach efforts of the Trust. This is comprised of select staff with skills and talents in communications from the Advocacy Office, SITLA, SITFO, the Treasurer's Office, and the School Children's Trust at USBE.

The Advocacy Office led in the creation of this team, to enhance collaboration and coordination of communication and public outreach efforts to build awareness and value of Utah's school and institutional trust lands. This is a great opportunity to help the Trust work collectively and improve effectiveness particularly on projects and issues we commonly share or overlap.

## SCHOOL & INSTITUTIONAL TRUST FUND OFFICE (SITFO) UPDATES

- HJR 18 and HB421 passed the legislative session. This will allow SITFO to pursue an increase in annual distributions to beneficiaries (read more in the Legislative Summary on p. 3).
- SITFO completed an in-depth asset allocation study utilizing resources from consultants RVK and Albourne. The annual study concluded there are no recommended changes to the asset allocation.



Ryan Kulig, SITFO Operations Officer and Representative Moss present HJR 18 and HB421 to the House Education Committee

## SCHOOL & INSTITUTIONAL TRUST LAND ADMINISTRATION (SITLA) UPDATES

- The major reorganization of combining the three previously separated groups, oil and gas, hard rock mining and coal and renewables into a new team, Energy & Minerals Team, has been very successful and has improved processes and efficiencies.
- SITLA staff has been involved in preparing a formal strategic plan that will be presented to the Board when it is completed.
- The Moab office is moving to Monticello and the Salt Lake Office will move to the 6th floor of 102 Tower in downtown Salt Lake in the coming months.
- The Dingell Act Exchange is now in the appraisal stage and will pick up some important targets for the Trust. The Bears Ears Exchange proposal is also moving forward with support from the Legislature, the Governor's Office, Senator Lee and Congressman John Curtis.
- New Trust Lands branding is being led by Marla Kennedy, Communications and Legislative Affairs Director. Staff has reviewed and reconsidered the mission and purpose statements for the trust that guide the work and outreach priorities. The mission statement begins with 'We are stewards of Utah's Trust Lands.' The vision includes a recognition of the opportunities for economic development trust lands bring to rural communities. The shared vision is reflected in a new logo and rebranding that will be reflected in outreach, the website, and the day-to-day work of SITLA.

## Legislative Session Summary

Beneficiary institutions of the Trust benefited significantly from the 2023 Legislative General Session in the following ways:

- Although all administering arms of the Trust System are funded through Trust earnings and proceeds rather than taxpayer dollars, we are accountable to the Legislature for our budgeted expenditures and appreciate the Legislature's support of our appropriation requests.
- With unanimous support from both the House and Senate of HJR 18 (Proposal to Amend Utah Constitution, State School Fund) voters in the 2024 election cycle will consider lifting the current 4% annual distribution limit of the Permanent School Fund to 5%. This will ensure intergenerational equity in how the Fund is administered and provide more funding for our current generation of schoolchildren. HB 421 (School LAND Trust Program Amendments), which also passed with unanimous support, provides complementary statutory amendments to the distribution policy of all Trust beneficiaries.
- The transfer of nearly \$161 million from the Public Education Economic Stabilization Account to the Permanent State School Fund will benefit schoolchildren now and for years to come. The Trust appreciates this unprecedented contribution and looks forward to putting it to good use for the schoolchildren of the state.
- Legislation was introduced through HB 273 that, if passed, would significantly stifle opportunities for SITLA to engage in meaningful land exchanges. Due to a strong collaborative effort from trust and beneficiary representatives, this bill was held in House Rules and never assigned to a committee for consideration.

